

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 FREETOWN 0228

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SUBJ: HUMAN RIGHTS ACTION PLAN FOR SIERRA LEONE

I. COUNTRY OVERVIEW - ENVIRONMENTAL DISCUSSION

A. SIERRA LEONE IS A TROUBLED COUNTRY AND THE PROSPECTS ARE THAT IT WILL BECOME STILL MORE TROUBLED IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS AS THE ECONOMY CONTINUES TO STAGNATE AND AS AGING PRESIDENT STEVENS BECOMES INCREASINGLY CONCERNED WITH RETAINING POWER. TRIBALISM IS THE KEY POLITICAL INGREDIENT WITH THE DOMINANT ALL PEOPLES CONGRESS (APC) PARTY BASED LARGELY ON THE TEMNE AND LESSER NORTHERN PROVINCE TRIBES, WHILE THE OPPOSITION SIERRA LEONE PEOPLE'S PARTY (SLPP) REPRESENTS MAINLY THE MENDE AND OTHER SOUTHERN AND EASTERN PROVINCE TRIBES. SINCE DBECTIONS IN MAY THE CREATION OF A ONE-PARTY STATE HAS BEEN A MAJOR PREOCCUPATION OF STEVENS AND THE APC HIERARCHY. DESPITE OPPOSITION THE REGIME APPEARS DETERMINED TO PRESS ON FOR A SINGLE-PARTY STATE, BUT NOT AT THE RISK OF PROVOKING FURTHER VIOLENCE.

B. THE LITTLE PROSPERITY THIS COUNTRY HAS KNOWN HAS BEEN ATTRIBUTABLE LARGELY TO FOREIGN EXCHANGE EARNINGS FROM DIAMOND EXPORTS, WHICH NOW ARE RAPIDLY DECLINING. ONLY BUOYANT WORLD PRICES PREVENTED DIMINISHED DIAMOND PRODUCTION

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FROM FURTHER DAMAGING AN UNFAVORABLE TRADE BALANCE AND A NEAR DISASTROUS BUDGETARY SITUATION. RECOGNIZING THAT DIAMONDS ARE NOT FOREVER THE GOVERNMENT HAS UNDERTAKEN A BELATED, INEFFICIENT, BUT SINCERE PROGRAM TO INCREASE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AT LEAST SO THERE WILL BE SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN BASIC FOODS AND SOME EXPORT CROPS TO EARN FOREIGN EXCHANGE. ROUGHLY 32 PERCENT OF ALL GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENT EXPENDITURES

ARE NOW DEVOTED TO INCREASING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND RURAL TRANSPORTATION WHILE 23 PERCENT OF THE EDUCATION AND 10 PERCENT OF THE SOCIAL WELFARE BUDGETS ARE MARKED FOR IMPROVING RURAL LIFE THROUGH PROVIDING HEALTH, EDUCATIONAL, AND SOCIAL WELFARE FACILITIES TO THIS PREVIOUSLY NEGLECTED AREA. THE GOVERNMENT IS PREPARED TO ACCEPT AID FROM ANY AND ALL SOURCES TO FURTHER THESE PROGRAMS, BUT INEFFICIENCY AND CORRUPTION LIMITE THE PROSPECTS FOR REDUCING ITS ECONOMIC DEPENDENCE ON DONOR NATIONS.

C. THE VIOLENCE LEADING TO AND SURROUNDING THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS HELD IN MID-1977 SERIOUSLY STRAINED SIERRA LEONE'S TRADITIONAL IMAGE AS A POLITICALLY TOLERANT NATION. A STATE OF EMERGENCY WAS PROCLAIMED BY PARLIAMENT EARLY IN 1977 AND DETENTIONS UNDER THE PUBLIC EMERGENCY ACT WERE EFFECTED. AT ONE TIME AS MANY AS 150 PERSONS WERE DETAINED SOLELY FOR POLITICAL REASONS BUT THIS NUMBER NOW HAS BEEN REDUCED TO TEN. IN THE NORTHERN PROVINCE AND I BO DISTRICT OPPOSITION CANDIDATES WERE PREVENTED FROM FILING NOMINATION PAPERS. ALTHOUGH SURFACE CALM PREVAILS AND THE APC PARTY COMMANDS A HUGE MAJORITY IN PARLIAMENT, THE STATE OF EMERGENCY REMAINS IN EFFECT AND STEVENS AND THE PARTY HIERARCHY CONTINUE TO SEEK WAYS OF NEUTRALIZING ANY POSSIBLE THREAT TO HIS CONTINUING RULE. THREE CONTINUOUSLY DETAINED OPPOSITION MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT WERE REMOVED FROM OFFICE FOR FAILING TO ATTEND PARLIAMENTARY SESSIONS AND THE LABOR CENTRAL IS COMING UNDER INCREASING

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PRESSURE TO CONFORM TO APC CONTROL. THE MEDIA IS HEAVILY INFLUENCED BY GOVERNMENT AND THE PARTY, ALTHOUGH ONE OPPOSITION PAPER IS PUBLISHED AND CIRCULATES WITHOUT APPARENT HINDERANCE. IN OTHER AREAS, HOWEVER, GOVERNMENT OBSERVANCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IS REMARKABLY GOOD. FREEDOM OF SPEECH, THOUGHT, RELIGION, ASSEMBLY AND TRAVEL ARE WIDELY OBSERVED. THERE ARE NO KNOWN INSTANCES OF HARSH OR BRUTAL PUNISHMENT OR GOVERNMENT INSPIRED MURDERS. THE JUDICIARY IS INDEPENDENT IN THE CONDUCT OF CIVIL AND CRIMINAL CASES, BUT NOT INDEPENDENT IN MATTERS INVOLVING ELECTION LAW OR PROCEDURE. AND THE GOVERNMENT TRIES TO MEET SUCH VITAL NEEDS AS FOOD, SHELTER, HEALTH CARE AND EDUCATION WITHIN ITS LIMITED RESOURCES.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 3 FREETOWN 0228

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II. MAJOR U.S. INTERESTS, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

A. STRENGTHENING BILATERAL RELATIONS:

1. ENCOURAGE SIERRA LEONE TO MAINTAIN A TRULY NON-ALIGNED POSTURE THAT WOULD PERMIT SUPPORT OF THE UNITED STATES ON CERTAIN CRITICAL ISSUES BY BUILDING UPON ITS TRADITIONAL FRIENDLY TIES WITH THE WEST. OBJECTIVE BEING IMPLEMENTED THROUGH CLOSE AND CONSTRUCTIVE RELATIONS WITH SENIOR GOSL FOREIGN POLICY DECISION MAKERS.
2. ESTABLISH NEW AID PRIORITIES TO ASSIST IN AN IMPROVED RATE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THAT EMPHASIZES EXPANDED FOOD PRODUCTION AND GREATER WELL-BEING OF THE RURAL POPULATION. FOUR USAID PROJECTS HAVE EITHER BEEN APPROVED OR SUBMITTED TO EXPAND FOOD PRODUCTION AND IMPROVE RURAL LIFE.

B. HEIGHTEN REGIONAL COOPERATION:

1. ENCOURAGE SIERRA LEONE'S PARTICIPATION IN REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS ESPECIALLY ECOWAS. OBJECTIVE BEING IMPLEMENTED THROUGH CLOSE COORDINATION WITH SIERRA LEONE NATIONAL BANK (WEST AFRICAN CLEARING HOUSE) AND CONTACTS WITH MINISTERIES OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND DEVELOPMENT.

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2. SUPPORT SIERRA LEONE'S CLOSER ASSOCIATION WITH LIBERIA THROUGH THE MANO RIVER UNION. USAID IS CONSIDERING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECTS WITH MANO RIVER UNION.

C. ENHANCEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS ENVIRONMENT IN SIERRA LEONE:
USE INTERNATIONAL VISITORS GRANTS TO PARLIAMENTARIANS AND OTHER MEASURES TO ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF STABLE AND DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS WHOSE PROPER FUNCTIONING

WOULD GUARANTEE FURTHER RESPECT FOR BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS. THREE GRANTS PROPOSED FOR INFLUENTIAL PARLIAMENTARIANS.

D. U.S. INTERESTS:

1. ACCESS TO SIERRA LEONE'S MINERAL RESOURCES.
2. A CLIMATE OF WELCOME FOR INCREASED AMERICAN INVESTMENT AND TRADE.
3. ACCESS TO SIERRA LEONE'S PORTS AND AIRFIELDS.

III. HUMAN RIGHTS

A. OBJECTIVES:

1. ENCOURAGE CONTINUED GOVERNMENTAL OBSERVANCE OF THE INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON.
2. ENCOURAGE CONTINUED GOVERNMENT EMPHASIS ON INCREASED AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT.
3. SEEK TO EASE USE OF DETENTIONS UNDER THE PUBLIC EMERGENCY ACT.

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B. SCENARIO:

1. OBJECTIVES

A. REITERATE U.S. POSITION IN TERMS OF THE THREE BASIC CATEGORIES OF HUMAN RIGHTS AS OUTLINED BY THE SECRETARY IN HIS APRIL 1977 LAW DAY ADDRESS TO GOSL TOP FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC POLICY DECISION-MAKERS TO INCLUDE THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE FOREIGN MINISTER, THE PRIME MINISTER, THE VICE PRESIDENT, AND THE PRESIDENT.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 3 OF 3 FREETOWN 0228

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B. REITERATE U.S. RESPECT FOR SIERRA LEONE'S OBSERVANCE
OF THE INTEGRITY OF THE PERSON AND ITS CONTINUED EMPHASIS
ON INCREASED AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT.

C. THROUGH THE MAINTENANCE OF SYMPATHETIC AND CONSTRUCTIVE
PERSONAL RELATIONS WITH KEY MEMBERS OF THE GOSL POWER STRUC-
TURE SEEK TO EMPHASIZE THE ADVERSE IMAGE CREATED ABROAD BY
THE CONTINUED USE OF DETENTIONS UNDER THE PUBLIC EMERGENCY
ACT, WHERE SUCH DETENTIONS SHOULD FALL UNDER CRIMINAL CODES.

2. BENCH MARKS

A. CNTINUED RIGHTS TO FREEDOM OF SPEECH, THOUGHT, RELIGION,
TRAVEL AND ASSEMBLY.

B. CONTINUED FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, DEGRADING, OR
INHUMAN PUNISHMENT OR TREATMENT.

C. CONTINUED GOVERNMENT EMPHASIS ON INCREASED AGRICULTURAL
PRODUCTION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT.

D. A REDUCTION IN THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS DETAINED UNDER
THE PROVISIONS OF THE PUBLIC EMERGENCY ACT.

3. U.S. POSITION - POSITIVE CONFIDENTIAL

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A. APPROVE PENDING ADAPTIVE CROP RESEARCH AND EXTENSION
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

B. APPROVE CONTINUATION OF PENDING PL 480 TITLE I PROGRAM
FOR FY 1978.

C. PROCEED WITH INCREASING REVENUE FOR DEVELOPMENT PRO-
JECT.

D. APPROVE USAID PARTICIPATION IN IBRD RURAL ROAD MAINTEN-
ANCE PROJECT.

4. U.S. POSITION - LESS POSITIVE (12 MONTH TIME FRAME).

A. APPROVE PENDING ADAPTIVE CROP RESEARCH AND EXTENSION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

B. RECONSIDER THE INCREASING REVENUE FOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECT.

C. REDUCE LEVEL OF PL 480 TITLE I PROGRAM FOR FY 1979.

D. DO NOT APPROVE USAID IBRD RURAL ROAD MAINTENANCE PROJECT.

C. IMPACT ON OTHER POLICIES AND PROGRAMS:

1. IN ADDITION TO PROGRAMS DESCRIBED ABOVE PEACE CORPS MAINTAINS SOME 180 VOLUNTEERS LARGELY IN RURAL PRIMARY EDUCATION AND AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION WORK. THESE ACTIVITIES DIRECTLY BENEFIT THE RURAL POOR AND SHOULD CONTINUE WHETHER THE HUMAN RIGHTS ACTION PLAN SUCCEEDS. A FEW VOLUNTEERS ARE ENGAGED IN AREAS OF ACTIVITY NOT DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE RURAL POOR
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AND CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO A REDUCTION OF THESE VOLUNTEERS, IF THE LESS POSITIVE U.S. POSITION IS ADOPTED PRIOR TO THEIR PLANNED PAUSE-OUT.

2. CARE, CRS, AND OICI ALL OPERATE ESSENTIALLY RURAL ORIENTED PROGRAMS UNDER AID GRANTS. SINCE THESE PROGRAMS DIRECTLY BENEFIT THE RURAL POOR THEY SHOULD BE CONTINUED REGARDLESS OF THE SUCCESS OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS ACTION PLAN.
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